

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the present application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A telephone system comprising:

a switching system for receiving a call from a calling party;

a voice mailbox coupled to the switching system for receiving the call if a called party does not answer the call; and

a telephone for receiving the call from the calling party, wherein the telephone joins the calling party, the called party, and the voice mailbox, ~~wherein the telephone bridges a three-way call between the calling party and the voice mailbox,~~ wherein the telephone comprises at least one option key that enables a user to turn on or turn off voice mail screening, wherein a number "1" is pressed to turn the voice mail screening on, and wherein a number "2" is pressed to turn the voice mail screening off, and wherein the telephone is capable of screening the calling party when the calling party is coupled to the voice mailbox.

2. (Previously presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the telephone further comprises first and second connections to the switching system, wherein one of the first and second connections is utilized to provide the three-way call.

3. (Previously presented) The system of claim 2 wherein the calling party cannot hear the called party during the three-way call.

4. (Previously presented) The system of claim 3 wherein the called party can, through interaction with the telephone, talk with the calling party through the other of the first and second connections, and wherein the voice mailbox is dropped from the call.

5. (Currently amended) A method for voice mail screening comprising ~~the steps of:~~

(a) —receiving a call from a calling party by a voice mailbox; and

(b) —joining a called party, the calling party, and the voice mailbox, wherein the telephone joins the calling party, the called party, and the voice mailbox, wherein a telephone comprises at least one option key that enables a user to turn on or turn off voice mail screening, wherein the telephone joins the calling party, the called party, and the voice mailbox, wherein the telephone bridges a three-way call between the calling party and the voice mailbox, wherein a number "1" is pressed to turn the voice mail screening on, and wherein a number "2" is pressed to turn the voice mail screening off, and wherein the called party can screen a message from the calling party.

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 5 further comprising the step of (c) preventing the calling party from hearing the called party during the three-way call.

7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of (d) dropping the voice mailbox from the three-way call by the telephone when the called party speaks to the calling party.

8. (Currently amended) A computer readable medium containing program instructions for voice mail screening, the program instructions for:

(a) —receiving a call from a calling party by a voice mailbox; and

(b) —joining a called party, the calling party, and the voice mailbox, wherein the telephone joins the calling party, the called party, and the voice mailbox, wherein a telephone comprises at least one option key that enables a user to turn on or turn off voice mail screening, ~~wherein the telephone joins the calling party, the called party, and the voice mailbox,~~ wherein the telephone bridges a three-way call between the calling party and the voice mailbox, wherein a number "1" is pressed to turn the voice mail screening on, and wherein a number "2" is pressed to turn the voice mail screening off, and wherein the called party can screen a message from the calling party.

9. (Previously presented) The computer readable medium of claim 8 further comprising the step of (c) preventing the calling party from hearing the called party.

10. (Previously presented) The computer readable medium of claim 9 further comprising the step of (d) dropping the voice mailbox from the three-way call by the telephone when the called party speaks to the calling party.

11. (Currently amended) A telephone comprising:
a receiver for receiving a call from a calling party; and
a voice mail screening system within the telephone for allowing a called party to hear the calling party when the calling party is coupled to a voice mailbox, wherein the telephone joins the calling party, the called party, and the voice mailbox, and wherein the telephone comprises at least one option key that enables a user to turn on or turn off voice mail screening, ~~and wherein the telephone bridges a three-way call between the calling party and the voice mailbox~~ and wherein a number "1" is pressed to turn the voice mail screening on, and wherein a number "2" is pressed to turn the voice mail screening off.

12. (Previously presented) The telephone of claim 11 wherein the telephone further comprises first and second connections to the switching system, wherein one of the first and second connections is utilized to provide the three-way call.

13. (Previously presented) The telephone of claim 12 wherein the calling party cannot hear the called party during the three-way call.

14. (Previously presented) The telephone of claim 13 wherein the calling party can, through interaction with the telephone, talk with the calling party through the other of the first and second connections, and wherein the voice mailbox is dropped from the call.

15-18. (Canceled)